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AUSTIN PRESBYTERIAN
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

BULLETIN

FACULTY EDITION

Responses to 'Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry'

THE AUSTIN PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

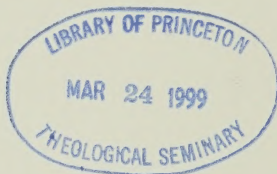
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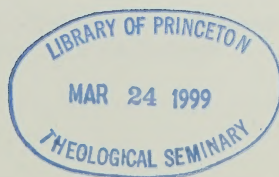
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AUSTIN SEMINARY BULLETIN

FACULTY EDITION

Responses to 'Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry'

OCTOBER, 1984



BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

The Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest is located a few blocks from Austin Presbyterian Seminary on the northern boundary of the University of Texas. A few years ago Wartburg Seminary of the American Lutheran Church established a specialty in Hispanic ministries in relation to the Episcopal and Presbyterian Seminaries. There is a stimulating theological interchange among professors as well as cooperative educational ventures between these seminaries.

The essays in this faculty edition of the *Bulletin* were discussed last spring in a meeting of professors from the three schools. The discussion was too long to be recorded and printed, but we think you will appreciate these papers about the Lima documents on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.

I have spent my whole academic career in what is known as "practical theology." Most of that time those of us in the field have spent most of our time relating theology to life. We accepted the Church's theology of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry as a part of what we were to interpret to lay people. I have the feeling that most ministers, likewise, have held the view that after we had worked out our theology we were then to focus on sin, forgiveness, evil, providence and other aspects of human life about us.

The experience of reading these essays (which critique the theology of our church life) and listening to the discussion has left me with the feeling that I have not paid enough attention to the theology of the sacraments and our theological explanation of ordination. I left the joint faculty seminar last spring with a mental note that I must spend more study time on these matters. If the essays stimulate you to go back to the Bible and to reexamine the doctrines of our church about sacraments and ministry, we will consider them a success.

C. Ellis Nelson
Interim President

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A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION TO 'BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY'

Robert S. Paul

Let me start by being very personal. I have always found it difficult to discard neckties. For one thing, in Texas they never get such use that they are in danger of getting frayed; then, one can always be sure that an out-of date style will eventually return, often after gathering dust in a clothes closet for years; and finally, I admit that I am attached to the sartorial splendour of earlier years, possibly because of nostalgia, but also, I suspect, because I prefer the standards of taste that were around then.

I

I start off in this way to make one basic point about *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, because it looks as if ecumenism is back in fashion after almost twenty years in the old-clothes closet. And by 'ecumenism' I mean not simply the pleasant sentiment that we should be nice to other Christians, but the hard, tough-minded willingness to wrestle with the intransigent problems that have kept the churches apart for centuries – what used to be called in the days of our youth, Faith and Order.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry is beginning to make Faith and Order fashionable in the churches once again, and I am starting in this way in order to say bluntly that changes in theological fashion are not a good enough reason for taking this document seriously, that unless the concern with unity rests on a firmer basis than that, the document will enjoy no happier fate than all the attempts that preceded it, and we may have failed our generation.

We have to ask ourselves some hard questions: *why* do we pursue the ecumenical ideal? Why is the *visible* unity of Christians important? Is unity important because it makes practical common sense? Or because our church leaders see it as a way out of the present ecclesiastical doldrums? Or is it because we have at last become convinced that Jesus Christ wants his people to be one people, and *obviously* one

people?¹ Of course, we will all claim that the last is our fundamental motivation—indeed, that is a professional stance for many of us—but if Christ's will for his Church is our true motivation, then I submit we cannot allow this effort to pass into ecclesiastical limbo when some new theological fashion tries to push it once more into the shadows. That motivation demands constant and unremitting commitment from us all.

There is another point related to our theological preferences that should be made as we begin to consider *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. The document is not specifically addressed to the churches in America, but to the Church throughout the world. You may read through the document and not find anything that seems to be directly related to the churches in your own state, or for that matter, to the churches in the U.S.A. That does not mean that the issues are less important for us, because we are presented with questions that will have to be addressed if there is ever to be a Church of Jesus Christ that is genuinely universal. The success of this document in the churches we know best will depend largely on how far we think our own kind of church is the norm to which other Christians must conform, or the extent to which we are prepared to recognize Christian traditions that are very different, and even more venerable than our own.

During my time of direct ecumenical involvement² I very quickly learned that ecumenical conversion for many Christians came when they faced for the first time the question, 'Do you really *want* to belong to the Universal Church of Jesus Christ, or would you really prefer to belong to something more like a spiritual club where everyone thinks precisely as you do yourself?' This document should challenge people in that way.

Now I am not suggesting that our Reformed view of the Church must be wrong, or that we need to apologize to the rest of the world for it. Truth, particularly theological truth, is never finally resolved by majority votes—and that is something of which we ought to remind not only our denominations but also ecumenical agencies like the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches. Nor am I suggesting that because the Church is worldwide and we represent a minority in it, this document has to be received by us as Moses received the tables of the Law on Sinai. I am simply pointing out that this is where the discussion starts—neither with the presumption that we have it all, nor yet with the assumption that we are devoid of truth, but with the recognition that the unity Jesus Christ wants for his Church inevitably brings us into serious conversation with all Christians.

It is particularly important to start with this understanding before studying *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, because unlike many pre-

vious ecumenical statements it reflects insights that may appear foreign to many American Protestants. Clearly Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic sources provided important input for this study, and that, for many, will be a shock; but this may be where the conversation will probably have to start if the ecumenical expressions of Christian faith and the churchly community are to be universal.

However, let me offer an important addendum to this. We could feel happier if after reading this document people *go back to study their own confessional position* to see what their own church tradition has contributed to the Christian understanding of the gospel. Part of the problem in Protestantism is that church members do not know their own basic theology or the historical reasons why their church reached its distinctive positions; we know only the prejudices that have been spawned from them.

Seminaries may have to shoulder a great deal of the blame for the poor job of theological (ecumenical) education that our graduates have been doing in the parishes, although, let it be said very clearly, seminaries have simply supplied what the churches have demanded. The first, and possibly the most important contribution of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* to the future unity of the Church, will be if it drives us back to understand our own theological origins and the historical circumstances which have molded our testimony. Then we shall have something useful to contribute to the discussion.

II

Now at this point I find myself drawn in several directions: 1. I should say something about the historical background to the document, 2. We should take due note of the ways in which it represents an ecumenical advance on the work of the past. 3. We should reflect on the significance of its coming to *us*, i.e. of its being sent not only to the 'denominations' but to *congregations* and *parishes*.

III

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry stands in debt to all the theological work that has engaged us since the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement, and more particularly since the foundation of the Faith and Order movement. The modern ecumenical movement, at least insofar as it took root in Protestantism, began with an attempt to address the practical problem that churches claiming to be 'Christian' continued to rival each other on the mission field. That was the reason for calling the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910, and out of that event grew the widespread recognition that practical problems of this kind would not be tackled effectively until the churches were prepared to address the theological issues that divided them. This insight

led directly to the founding of the Faith and Order movement, and its first conference at Lausanne in 1927.

Once that movement began, the basic issues very quickly were seen to focus in different understandings of the Church's ministry and sacraments.³ This needs to be emphasized, first because it shows that the ecclesiological issues with which this document deals have been at the center of ecumenical debate for a long time, and secondly because it reminds us that from the first the movement understood that there can be no *practical* ecumenism without theological integrity.

More specifically, behind this document there is over a decade of intense theological debate. The study was initiated at the Faith and Order meeting at Louvain in 1971, and by the time of the meeting in Accra in 1974 about 100 responses to the draft had been received from different churches. Since that time, considerable progress was made involving an immense amount of work through drafting and editing in theological committees, through exposure in the World Council of Churches' Assemblies at Nairobi in 1975 and more recently at Vancouver in 1983, and then in the Faith and Order meetings at Bangalore (1978) and Lima in 1982⁴.

IV

The document, however, arises out of the history of the ecumenical movement in a much more fundamental way than we can indicate simply by rehearsing a history of consultations and conferences. Behind all this thinking there is the fundamental question of our basic authority for the faith we profess—a question about which the denominations recently have been very coy, but with which the ecumenical movement has continued to wrestle in our name: *where is the fundamental authority for claiming to be the Church of Jesus Christ, and for proclaiming his gospel?* Where do we place our priority—in the Bible, in the Church, its tradition and hierarchy, or in the immediacy of the Holy Spirit within personal religious experience? Do we discover our basic authority in some form of Christian pragmatism, or is it to be found in the Holy Spirit who speaks through all these channels of grace, and who calls on us to discover the relationship between all the testimonies to the Living Christ?

Now to a large number of Christians this will sound like a silly question. It will sound particularly silly to the person who claims ultimate authority in a literalistic approach to scripture, a legalistic approach to the Church and its hierarchy, a deterministic view of Christian experience, or who deifies human reason. But I suspect that for most churches today the issue cannot be dismissed simplistically in an exclusive appeal to a single absolute authority.

Obviously this is not the place to address a problem that has exer-

cised almost all the churches since the Reformation and most acutely since the scientific revolution of the nineteenth century. I have written on it fairly extensively, and I have every intention of continuing to write more until I see some sign of the churches facing up to it properly.⁵ But the significance of our document is that it illustrates the importance of the authority issue for the unity of the churches. As you read the document ask yourself the question 'What basic spiritual authority is being claimed for what is said here about the Church, its ministry and its sacraments?' That continues to be the basic issue for the future of the Church and for the whole ecumenical enterprise, and it has an important ecumenical history.

We did not have to face the issue in an acute form until the mid-'60s, for during the first phase of 20th century ecumenical dialogue (i.e. 1910-ca. 1960) the ecumenical discussion was largely limited to the Protestant churches, although some branches of Eastern Orthodoxy became involved in 1921. No small part of the triumph of that earlier stage was that these churches were able to reach a consensus on the 'authority issue' on the basis of 'biblical theology.' You can read about that in *Biblical Authority for Today*, which was compiled for Faith and Order in 1951.⁶

For the church people of that generation, there was theological consensus that the fundamental authority for the Christian proclamation, ethics and the nature of the Church was to be found in 'biblical theology.' The ecumenical movement got started as people gathered together to study that biblical testimony. Even the Student Christian Movement found itself having to establish Bible study groups!⁷ The approach came to be known as biblical *theology* because it claimed that it went to the Bible not simply to reproduce in the 20th century a literal reproduction of 1st century Christianity, but to discover the sources of Christian doctrine and the earliest institutions of the Church.

Unfortunately this manifested itself too often as a new kind of fundamentalism. Ecumenical theologians of the late '40s and '50s could often be justly accused of using the scriptures to provide proof texts for doctrines they wanted to prove were orthodox. They forgot that primarily what we *ought* to be dealing with when we use a term like 'biblical theology' is not our credal preferences, but *the God revealed to us in the Bible* who stands behind the creeds. This misunderstanding produced the reaction of the '60s, and ecumenism has not yet recovered, because there is no longer a consensus about our basic authority.

Christians want to know not only what their ecclesiastical leaders think should be believed and done in the Church, but why their ecclesiastical mentors should insist that the answers are to be accepted *in God's name*. What is your *authority* for insisting that this measure in

social ethics or that church union or a particular approach to evangelism is the will of Jesus Christ? If you can offer clear *Christian* reasons why I should accept your answers, I will follow your lead, but if you cannot I will most likely retreat behind the certainties I learned in Sunday School. This is the authority issue.

As I read our document, I sense that it may represent an attempt to place the authority issue on a new basis, for one has the impression that there is a new emphasis on the authority of the Church and its 'Tradition' which has always been the focus of the issue for Eastern Orthodox and Catholic branches of the Church.

Of course, as an exclusive answer to the problem, that has had its dangers, too, for if there is a danger of becoming too literal with respect to scripture, there has been an equal danger of becoming too legalistic in respect to the Church's tradition and too restricted in limiting the work of the Holy Spirit to institutions. The Reformation is testimony enough to that, and that is why it is so necessary for all Protestants who have now become temporary ecumenists to recognize the need of studying their own roots.

On the other hand, although there is evidence in the document for an emphasis on the authority of the Church and its tradition, the compilers realized that the problem of spiritual authority is a good deal more complex than churches represented it in the past, and they made a real attempt to recognize that the Holy Spirit speaks to the Church through several channels of grace.

This is to be noted in the Preface, where it cites the Faith and Order Conference at Montreal in 1963. There the report spoke of the churches listening to each other in a new way and of returning "to the primary sources, namely 'the Tradition of the Gospel testified in Scripture, transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.'"¹⁸ This attempt to recognize various channels of authority may not be as pronounced as we would wish,¹⁹ but the emphasis is there and it can be traced all through the statement.

V

Furthermore, the emphasis on Tradition does not mean that those who were responsible for *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* exchanged a biblical basis for ecumenism for one grounded in church Tradition. On the contrary, the debate on each issue begins by laying down the biblical evidence.

This is done succinctly and fairly, and as far as I can see, there has been no conscious attempt to weight the evidence in a consciously 'ecumenical' direction. That is important, because one lesson we should have certainly learned from the '60s is that there is no place for any theology that is basically dishonest. Our secular contemporaries

think that the truth should stand on its own legs, and a critical younger generation regards weighted evidence as a contradiction of the gospel we are proclaiming. *Laus deo!*

The document should therefore be seen not as superseding past studies, but as building on them: the biblical work of the past, insofar as it can be shown to belong to the gospel, has been incorporated into the present document. This means that there is, in the best tradition of the ecumenical movement, a serious attempt made to represent all confessional and ecclesiastical points of view, and this has now been enriched by recognition of 'Catholic' branches of the Church in a way that was not possible before Vatican II, or before all the branches of Eastern Orthodoxy became involved.

However, it is enriched by another dimension, of which we are only just becoming dimly aware. In many geographical areas which, until recently, were given over to the work of Western missionaries, indigenous churches are insisting on looking at ecclesiology and worship in contextual rather than in confessional or theological terms. How does being an African Christian, a Pacific Islander or an Asian affect the way in which one regards baptism, eucharist and ministry? How do different areas of the world differ in what they expect of the Church, how they understand the Church, and how far have our ideas about the Church been dominated by Western European assumptions?¹⁰

All this reflects the increasing involvement of the Church in Third World countries in roles of leadership within the ecumenical arena, and insofar as for many years we were urging the churches in those parts of the world to make a proportional contribution to Christian theology, we can hardly grumble that they have now listened to us!

I must risk a further personal comment here, because I suspect that American theology could have a significant contribution to make to the ecumenical discussion at this point. It might assist dialogue between the theologically-based confessions of Europe, and the contextual theology and ecclesiology that seem to be arising in Africa. Nearly thirty years of teaching church history in America have shown me that although most of the mainline churches in America own their European roots, they modified European ecclesiologies in order to meet the challenge of the American context. How these two aspects of the problem – the theological and the contextual – are related is something on which American theology and history should have some constructive insights.

I have other questions for the compilers: 1. I think they did listen to the confessional and geographical differences that affect the way we interpret the form of the Church and its sacraments, but were they equally careful to listen to differences that cut across denominational and theological lines and which separate us almost more tragically

than confession, geography and culture, e.g. between liturgical and non-liturgical practices or between conservative, evangelical and liberal? Do we have in this document a consensus of theological opinion that *tacitly* excludes some Christians? And if so, whom does it exclude, and why? This is not merely rhetorical, but it is simply to remind us of the question that no ecumenical document can afford to ignore without denying what it claims.

We should also note and welcome the determination throughout the document to hold Christian worship and Christian action together. Those who spring from the Reformed tradition may not realize how foreign this accent appears to some who come from other traditions, although from the first, the ecumenical movement maintained that essential relationship between belief and action in the interplay between Faith & Order and Life & Work. 2. But that prompts another question. Is there, I wonder, an equal willingness to maintain the essential relationship between these emphases and the evangelical outreach of the Church? What about that universal mission in light of the challenge presented by other faiths? I am simply raising questions, in the hope that in our immediate preoccupation with inter-church ecumenism, we shall not ignore the missionary imperative which is also an essential aspect of the ecumenical enterprise.

VI

We come to the last of the three major questions raised at the beginning, and it could very well be the point on which the success or failure of ecumenism in our time succeeds or fails. This is to consider the significance of this document being sent down for study to the churches, to us.

Just after the Amsterdam Assembly in 1948, the British Council of Churches arranged a massive reunion in the Central Hall, Westminster, for all those who had been participants at the Amsterdam Assembly. We were to reflect on the historical importance of that event, and to consider the next steps in the ecumenical enterprise. Of all the things that were said on that impressive occasion, the thing that impressed this very young minister most of all was comment made by Dr. Wand, who was then, I believe, the Bishop of London. He declared "all that now needs to happen is for the message of Amsterdam to be carried down to the parishes." It impressed me then, and it has impressed me even more over the years, because it never happened.

We can say much the same about Consultation on Church Union. When I made the same point to a former General Secretary, he replied that C.O.C.U. had neither the resources nor the opportunity to carry the message to the parishes; and then he added wistfully that the denominations did not appear to have any incentive to do anything

about it.

We do not lack sound insights, dedicated theological work, and inspired leadership. We often lack resources, but most of all churches lack a willingness to risk the issues at the parish level. This is where the block occurs, because ecclesiastical leaders who have themselves undergone ecumenical conversion often think it is enough simply to instruct the ministers and people in the parishes what to believe and how to act.

We are back to the 'authority issue': ecclesiastical leaders cannot expect Christians simply to be obedient on their word alone. How can those who have never experienced the trauma and the triumph of ecumenical confrontation or the thrill of reaching ecumenical consensus be expected to endorse the latest union proposals of a bishop or Conference executive just because he (she?) is a bishop or Conference executive? Not in these days, and especially not in the kinds of churches we know. People in the parishes need opportunity to engage in similar ecumenical encounter and 'conversion' that privileged leaders have experienced if the ecumenical goals are to become real in the parishes.

That is why this document is important: it is our opportunity to engage in that. The ecumenical enterprise remains in essentially the same place it was after Amsterdam – all that now needs to happen is for the message to get down to the parishes.

FOOTNOTES

¹John 17, especially vv. 20-23.

²The writer was assistant director 1954-5, and associate director 1955-8 of the Ecumenical Institute, and Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies, Château de Bossey, Switzerland (W.C.C. and University of Geneva.)

³'The Church's Ministry' and 'The Sacraments' were Nos. 5 and 6 of the 7 items chosen for the agenda at Lausanne, while the Continuation Committee was responsible for *The Ministry and the Sacraments* (1938), edited by R. Dunkerley and A. C. Headlam in preparation for the 2nd Conference on Faith and Order (1938). This in turn set up Theological Commissions which produced *The Nature of the Church* (1952), edited by R. Newton Flew, *Ways of Worship* (1951), edited by Pehr Edwall, Eric Hayman and William D. Maxwell, and *Intercommunion* (1952), edited by Donald Baillie and John Marsh, in preparation for the 3rd Conference on Faith & Order at Lund, 1952.

⁴Cf. Lewis S. Mudge, 'A Reformed Theologian Views the BEM Document', *Reformed World*, Vol. 37, No. 5 (March 1983), 131-140.

⁵*Ministry* (1965), chapter 6; *The Church in Search of Its Self* (1972), chapter 2; cf. 'The Unity of the Church – Quo Vadis?', *Midstream*, Vol. XIV, No. 1; 'Ecumenical Vision in the 1970s', *Midstream*, Vol. XVI, No. 2 (April 1977); 'Where We Begin: Freedom and Responsibility in the U.C.C.', *New Conversations*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Fall 1979).

⁶Edited by Alan Richardson and Wolfgang Schweitzer (1951). It contains the consensus reached at the ecumenical conference held in Wadham College, Oxford in 1949: 'Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible,' pp. 240-244.

⁷Cf. Philippe Maury's illuminating introduction to 'Ecumenism and the Bible,' *The Student World*, Vol. XLIX, No. 1 (First Quarter, 1956), pp. 1-4.

⁸*Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* p.ix. Cf. *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: Montreal 1963*, edited by P. C. Rodger and Lukas Vischer (1964), pp. 51-52.

⁹A good deal is said in *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* about the corporate experience of the Holy Spirit's work through the Church, but until the Reformation insight of Justification by Faith is disproved, it needs to be given clearer *ecclesiastical* recognition: if there is no longer any need for Confirmation, what takes its place?

¹⁰If one regards that as irrelevant for theology, reflect on how rural cultures have to interpret the idea of the divine society as a holy *city*, or how a Pacific Islander would interpret Rev. 21:1 which describes the Holy City as arriving within a firmament where there is 'no more sea.'

THE LIMA TEXT ON BAPTISM AND THE REFORMED TRADITION

Robert M. Shelton

In my judgment, those of us who stand within the Reformed tradition have many reasons to be grateful for the carefully worded Lima text on baptism. The ecumenical text contains within it emphases which have always been a part of Reformed theology, while at the same time presenting other emphases which can enrich our understanding of this sacrament of initiation. Moreover, some parts of the text present an appropriate challenge to the baptismal practice of many within the Reformed family.

The authors of the Lima document make clear that what they have written is not meant to be viewed as "a complete theological treatment of baptism." It is rather an attempt to set forth clearly and succinctly "the major areas of theological convergence" of over a dozen church traditions, including traditions as diverse as Eastern Orthodox and Baptist, Roman Catholic and Disciples. In addition to the main text, a commentary on the text is provided which deals with historical differences with respect to baptism which are still at issue among the traditions and require further study and dialogue, or which have been largely overcome.

The baptism portion of the Lima statement is divided into five sections: I. The Institution of Baptism; II. The Meaning of Baptism; III. Baptism and Faith; IV. Baptismal Practice; V. The Celebration of Baptism. A brief summary of each section will be helpful.

In the opening section dealing with the institution of baptism, the text declares that baptism is rooted in "the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, in his death and resurrection," and in the fact that as our risen Lord, Jesus commanded his disciples to go into the world to baptize those to whom they preached the good news. Jesus' ministry and command are therefore understood to be the basis for the universal practice of baptism by the Church from its earliest days, and constitute the warrant for our continuing the practice today. Also, in accord with Christ's instruction, baptism is to be administered in the name of

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The second section of the document elaborates five fundamental meanings of baptism, namely, "participation in Christ's death and resurrection," "conversion, pardoning and cleansing," "the gift of the spirit," "incorporation into the body of Christ," and "the sign of the kingdom." All of these meanings are rooted in scripture passages and biblical images. All of them also point to a new life through Jesus Christ and union with him. Moreover, all of these meanings are tied inextricably to and are dependent upon the grace bestowed upon us in and through Christ; while the meanings are many, the baptism is one.

In the section entitled "Baptism and Faith" the Lima text asserts that "baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift." The writers go on to aver that personal faith is necessary for "the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism."

Stress in this part of the text is on the importance and indeed the necessity of personal commitment to Christ and his kingdom, as well as the necessity to grow "in the Christian life of faith." Those baptized are not passive, devoid of all responsibilities. Rather baptism initiates persons into a life in which, empowered by the continuing experience of grace, they are called to reflect in their own lives the new life promised to those who are united with Christ, and to strive for "the will of God in all realms of life." Thus while baptism is God's gift, it calls for a faith response on the part of those who receive the gift.

The fourth section, the section on baptismal practice, addresses two very difficult theological and ecclesiological concerns. The first has to do with the cluster of theological disagreements which are related to the fact that some churches practice exclusively the baptism of believers, while other churches practice the baptism of children of believers as well. The second has to do with the differences among the various traditions with respect to baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

In addressing the matter of who are the proper recipients of baptism, the authors of the Lima text note that "baptism upon profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents," but that "the possibility that infant baptism was also practiced in the apostolic age cannot be excluded." Therefore, the validity of both forms of baptism is affirmed.

The text and the commentary then develop what is common to both practices, to wit: both forms of baptism are dependent upon God's initiative of grace and call for a personal response of faith; both expect that those baptized will grow in their faith and in their understanding of the Christian faith and the Christian life; both rely upon and proclaim Christ's faithfulness; both anticipate and require a community to provide nurture, instruction and occasions for witness and service for those baptized.

With respect to the gift of the Spirit and baptism, the text contends that while many different beliefs and practices exist regarding this matter, "all agree that Christian baptism is in water and the Holy Spirit." In other words, whatever actions are associated with the giving of the Spirit, they are all related to baptism with water.

The final part of this critical section is a plea for mutual recognition among churches of each other's baptisms acknowledging that each form is an expression of the "one baptism into Christ." Moreover, since baptism is one, it cannot be repeated. In addition, the point is put forth that churches which practice one form to the exclusion of the other would do well to critique their position and practice in the light of the emphases and understandings inherent in the other.

The concluding section of the baptism text explores the celebration of baptism. Here it is pointed out that water is the primary and essential symbol for the sacrament and "the symbolic dimension of water should be taken seriously and not minimalized." The document then identifies and describes additional ways in which some in the church have signified the gift of the Spirit in baptism from the early centuries to the present, namely, the laying on of hands, anointing, and the sign of the cross.

A very interesting portion of this section, particularly for Presbyterians in the United States who soon will be receiving a new baptismal rite for trial use, is the listing in this document of the essential elements for a comprehensive baptismal order. Those elements mentioned as essential are: 1. "The proclamation of the scriptures referring to baptism." 2. "An invocation of the Holy Spirit." 3. "A renunciation of evil." 4. "A profession of faith in Christ and the Holy Trinity." 5. "The use of water." 6. "A declaration that the persons baptized have acquired a new identity as sons and daughters of God, and as members of the Church, called to be witnesses of the Gospel." All of these components have deep historical roots in the practice and theology of the Church.

This summary is my own interpretation of the shape and particular emphases of the text and commentary. Doubtless others would summarize the material differently. But I hope that these synopses will encourage those who have not studied the document to obtain it and read it. Now I wish to move on to discuss how the document can enrich and challenge the thinking of those of us within the Reformed churches.

First of all the text and commentary can serve us well by helping to enlarge our theological and biblical understanding of baptism. For example, the Reformed tradition in its creedal statements regularly has placed a great deal of weight upon the meaning of baptism attested to by the phrases "engrafting into Christ," remission of sins" and "a sign and seal of the covenant of grace." These notions are all found in the

Lima text (although I think it is accurate to say that the sign and seal of the covenant of grace receives much less attention than many in the Reformed family would like), but numerous other rich and powerful images and ideas are used which have biblical warrant.

One of these is "participation in Christ's death and resurrection." For many Presbyterians as well as others who bear the name Reformed, the death, burial and resurrection passage in Romans 6 has been a way of talking about baptism which only the Baptists or others who practice immersion could use. Indeed, even when Reformed creeds and theologians have cited the Romans passage, seldom has the language of that biblical text found its way into the creeds or the doctrine posited.

But it is a powerful thought, and its basic meaning need not be tied to the practice of immersion, even if that mode of baptism best symbolizes the idea. What is at issue is nothing less than Christ's total solidarity with us in our sinfulness, our experience of the liberating death of Christ where the power of sin is broken, and our experience of being raised to a new life in the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To be sure, the "newness of life" in which the Westminster Confession proclaims we are to walk is the life into which we enter through our identity with Christ's resurrection. As Paul puts it: "as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

Another important note sounded in the Lima text which can contribute to an enlarged understanding of baptism within the Reformed family is the ethical aspect of baptism. Because baptism is understood to be a cleansing of the heart, and an act of justification, those baptized are given a new orientation to justice and mercy, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit express that new orientation. Likewise, those baptized are members of a new and different world, the Kingdom of God. As members of that Kingdom they are called, commissioned and empowered to live the future in the present, that future when every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God. In that sense we are called to *live out* our baptism, and to live out of our baptism.

Yet again, the document is helpful in deepening our understanding of being "engrafted into Christ." When many in the Reformed circle speak of being engrafted into or united with Christ, it is fundamentally a union that involves only Christ and the individual. Much more is envisaged by the Lima text. What is described there with the phrase "incorporation into the body of Christ" is a union "with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place." Baptism establishes our unity with the community of faith. It is not simply "me and Jesus," but a union with Christ and Christ's disciples of all ages.

The corporate nature of Christianity is highlighted in baptism.

That baptism needs to be constantly affirmed by those baptized is another aspect of the nature of baptism which may prove instructive for many of us who have studied only the Reformed view of the sacrament. Now clearly the insistence that baptism is an unrepeatable act does not lack for attestation in Reformed theology, and certainly that is a salient and vital point with respect to the nature of baptism. The act itself cannot be repeated; we must hold fast to that. However, that should not be interpreted to mean the significance and power of baptism are limited to that moment in time when the sacrament was administered.

Oscar Cullmann, the noted New Testament scholar, has stated that while baptism is unrepeatable, "the completed baptismal event" extends throughout all of a person's life. It was the reality of the ongoing baptismal event which Luther was giving witness to with his much used phrase *baptizatus sum*, "I was baptized." Confronted by a sense of sin, weakness, or failure, Luther would repeat the phrase to himself, and thus claim the power and deliverance of his baptism.

Few Presbyterian ministers there are today who have not received requests from parishioners to be "rebaptized." The reasons for the requests vary, but the problem pointed to is the same: a failure to understand the nature of baptism, which can never be repeated as an act, but the relevance of which keeps active right through an individual's life. It continues to be a channel of the grace of God.

Perhaps if we can see not only that baptism can be reaffirmed, but "*needs to be constantly reaffirmed*," as the Lima text in its commentary declares, then we may be able to deal effectively with what is behind the requests for "rebaptism." It could also enrich our lives as Christians.

The obvious question that follows is "How can we reaffirm our baptism?" The Lima commentary appropriately answers that "the most obvious form of such reaffirmation is the celebration of the eucharist." Each time we partake of the Lord's Supper we reaffirm our baptism. That is significant to remember. Yet that is not all. Christians may renew their baptismal vows during the baptism of others, or on occasions of the Church's great festival celebrations such as Easter, Pentecost, Epiphany. Furthermore, just as Luther demonstrated, Christians may reaffirm their baptism in the midst of a variety of troubling or rewarding times. The Church could well provide guidance for such reaffirmation.

Let me now turn to discuss some aspects of the Lima text which I judge to be not so useful in the Reformed tradition.

The first of these is the lack of an adequate statement regarding the theological significance of baptizing the children of believers. This

practice in the Reformed tradition has been based upon a theological understanding of covenant, wherein God's covenant of grace is made not simply with an individual, but with the community, including the children of the community. While covenant theology can hardly be said to be in vogue nowadays, it still has a history of long standing in the Reformed churches, and it has rootage in biblical texts. Also, anyone who has read Paul or Calvin knows the significant place covenant occupies in their writing about baptism.

My own understanding of the Reformed view of baptism leads me to say further that the baptism of infants of believers is particularly in order because of prevenient grace. God's initiative of grace *always* precedes our faith. This is most powerfully proclaimed in the baptism of the infants of those who are members of the community of faith. The grace is there as a reality, signified in the child's baptism, long before the child can exercise personal faith. But the same is true of the adult who comes making a personal profession. The faith is after the grace, and in a profound sense the baptism preceded their faith. I regard this as being extremely important for the Reformed view.

A second weakness of the Lima text from the standpoint of Reformed theology and practice is the failure of the text to mention any mode of administering baptism except immersion. Now, let me state that I understand the Reformed tradition has always acknowledged the validity of immersion as a mode, even though it has not been widely practiced by Reformed ministers. Let me further acknowledge that I am aware that in some traditions infants can, have been, and are immersed. Still another acknowledgement. The matter of the mode of baptism is in one sense a matter of indifference. Calvin made that point quite forthrightly in his *Institutes*. He wrote: "Whether the person baptized is to be wholly immersed and that whether once or thrice, or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water, is not of the least consequence: churches should be at liberty to adopt either, according to the diversity of climates."¹

Nevertheless, most churches in the Reformed family have not practiced immersion, and it should be viewed as only one mode. Pouring and sprinkling are also modes which express biblical motifs and signify better than immersion certain aspects of the meaning of baptism. For example, pouring more adequately symbolizes the pouring out of the Holy Spirit which is central to baptism, and is a critical New Testament image linked to baptism. Titus 3:5-6 refers to "the washing or regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he *poured out* on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." Sprinkling also has about it the notion of cleansing and washing which are consistent baptismal motifs. That mode has long been associated with the prophecy of Ezekiel that God "will sprinkle clean water upon you and make you clean"

(Ezek. 36:25). In the New Testament this cleansing through sprinkling is associated with the blood of Christ and pure water. So the author of Hebrews exhorts the readers to draw near to God with "our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. 10:22). Just as a variety of understandings help us grasp more fully the meaning of baptism, so a variety of modes of administration may serve to enrich our experience of the sacrament. In any case, if Presbyterians and others continue to practice pouring or sprinkling, they need to be aware of the baptismal symbolism embodied in the mode.

Let me conclude my reflections by suggesting that the Lima text and commentary bring judgment to bear on Reformed theology and practice with respect to baptism at two points at least. One is what can be called indiscriminate baptism of infants. The Lima document, in both the text and commentary, insists that it makes a mockery of baptism to administer the sacrament purely as a social event, where there is no evidence that the parents or sponsors are active, responsible members of a congregation, and there is no commitment on their part to bring the child up in the Christian faith. The Reformed practice of baptizing children of believers must take with the utmost seriousness the responsibility of parents or sponsors in the baptism of infants.

The second area of judgment is related to the first; it has to do with the responsibility of the entire congregation to nurture the baptized child, and to provide the context in which personal faith and commitment can be evoked and developed. If the Reformed churches are to continue to practice with integrity the baptism of infants who are a part of the community of faith, they will have to improve the discharging of their responsibility toward those baptized.

FOOTNOTE

¹John Calvin, *Institutes*, (LCC edition 1960 edited by John T. McNeill) Vol. II, p. 1320.

PRESBYTERIANS AND THE EUCHARIST

George W. Stroup III

It is appropriate that each community within the larger Christian family assess the statement on the eucharist in *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (hereafter *BEM*) from the perspective of its own theological tradition. *BEM* recognizes that the search for unity in the Christian understanding and practice of the eucharist cannot be attained by ignoring the important issues which traditionally have separated Christians in their celebration of the sacrament. To respond properly to the interpretation of the eucharist in *BEM* is not to become as generically and vaguely Christian as possible, but to examine the document from the particular and peculiar perspective of one's own tradition.

Without ignoring the problems that have divided Christians on the subject of the eucharist in the past, issues such as the nature of a sacrament and the mode of Christ's presence in the sacrament, *BEM* tries to find common ground around the Lord's table for as many of us as possible in the Christian community. The extent to which it succeeds is, in part, the degree to which as many Christian denominations as possible are able to recognize and affirm in it not simply their own theological position, but an interpretation of the Lord's Supper consistent with their tradition, which also provides space for other Christians as well.

So we must be prepared to ask Presbyterian questions of *BEM*. But we must also be prepared for *BEM* to ask questions of us Presbyterians as well. It may well be that our understanding of the eucharist will be altered and even enhanced by a genuine dialogue with this ecumenical statement. There are certainly ample theological warrants in the Reformed tradition for why we should be open to reform in our understanding and celebration of the Supper. *BEM* is quite right to insist that "The churches should test their liturgies in the light of the eucharistic agreement now in the process of attainment" (par. 28). In other words, if part of the Christian community has been able to reach some form of agreement on the eucharist, then we Presbyterians must ask ourselves whether we have failed to discern and heed the movement of the Spirit of our time.

It is appropriate, therefore, to assess *BEM* from the perspective of Reformed theology, but it is also appropriate that we allow *BEM* to put questions to Reformed theology. And if we read it in the spirit in which it was written, *BEM* raises basic, fundamental issues for Reformed theology and liturgy. Indeed, we will not understand or appreciate this document if we hasten too quickly to positions of criticism. While there are important questions that must be asked of *BEM*, we should acknowledge at the outset that it is the clear intention of this document not only to provide common ground for as many Christians as possible to gather at the Lord's table, but also to recover the drama, the mystery, and the "spirit" which invigorated the celebration of the eucharist in the early church. To a considerable extent, *BEM* succeeds in making the eucharist not merely a liturgical necessity but a rite in space and time through which Christians, by means of the power of the Spirit, receive the gift of God's love in Jesus Christ, are enabled to participate in God's work of reconciliation in the world, and anticipate the return of Christ and the reign of God's kingdom. Our questions and criticisms, therefore, should not be read as a denial of the vitality and significant contribution of this document.

I. A Summary of the Document

The statement on the eucharist in *BEM* is divided into three parts. The first part, consisting of a single paragraph, discusses the *institution* of the eucharist. The second part, which comprises the bulk of the document (paragraphs 2-26), takes up the question of the *meaning* of the eucharist. Finally, the third part (paragraphs 27-33) describes the *celebration* of the eucharist.

The document begins by describing the eucharist as "a gift from the Lord," and cites Paul's description of Jesus' "words of institution" in I Cor. 11:23-25. In the sentences that follow, *BEM* develops many of the basic themes that reappear throughout the document and that are used to describe the meaning and celebration of the Supper. Jesus' meals were a "sign," an enactment of the nearness of God's Kingdom. The eucharist, therefore, is both a continuation of Jesus' meals (and as such a sign of the kingdom) and the celebration of Jesus' presence in the post-resurrection Church. According to *BEM*, the eucharist is "a sacramental meal which by visible signs communicates God's love in Jesus Christ, the love by which Jesus loved his own 'to the end' . . ." (par. 1). This first part then concludes with what will surely be heard in many quarters as a controversial claim—namely, that the celebration of the eucharist is "the central act of the Church's worship" (par. 1).

The second part of the document, the discussion of the *meaning* of the eucharist, is divided into five sections: thanksgiving to the Father, memorial of Christ, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the faith-

ful, and meal of the Kingdom. These twenty-five paragraphs are the heart of the statement and deserve careful theological scrutiny.

One major theme that appears at the beginning of this description of the meaning of the eucharist is the claim that the sacrament is a gift from the Father, given to us in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The gift is communion with Christ and therein the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, life in Christ's body, and the pledge of eternal life. But the gift, the eucharist, is first and foremost God's gift and God's work. It is *not* first and foremost a human response to God.

Because the eucharist is first God's gift and God's work, it is also the means by which the Church, on behalf of the whole world, expresses thankfulness to the Father for what God has done. The eucharist is, in the words of the document, "the great sacrifice of praise by which the Church speaks on behalf of the whole creation" (par. 4).

Secondly, the eucharist is the *anamnesis* or memorial of the crucified and risen Christ. The document insists that by "memorial" it does not mean simply the recollection of a distant historical event, but refers to the "present efficacy of God's work." By *anamnesis* it means not simply the calling to mind of the significance of what is past, but its *representation* in the present and the *anticipation* of its full realization in the future. The eucharist is "the foretaste" of Christ's coming and of God's kingdom. The *anamnesis*, therefore, is expressed in thanksgiving to the Father for the unique, unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ, "who ever lives to make intercession for us."

Because the eucharist is the re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice and continual intercession, it is also "the basis and source of all Christian prayer" (par. 9). The eucharist nourishes us in our daily lives, and it renews us in the covenant. Here the church confesses that by faith Christians encounter the "real, living and active presence" of Christ in the bread and wine (par. 13).

Thirdly, Christ is really present in the eucharist by means of the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit "who makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive" (par. 14). It is also the Spirit's "immeasurable strength of love" which enables the physical elements of bread and wine to "become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood" (par. 15). Not only does the Spirit make Christ present and enable the bread and wine to become Christ's body and blood, but the same Spirit renews the church, leads it in its mission of justice, truth, and unity, and gives the church a foretaste of the kingdom.

Fourthly, by the power of the Spirit the eucharist is not only the communion of the congregation with Christ but the communion of the congregation with the church around the world and through the centuries. "Eucharistic celebrations always have to do with the whole church, and the whole church is involved in each local eucharistic cel-

etration" (par. 19). And the eucharist is not limited to the church universal; it embraces all aspects of life. In the eucharist, Christians celebrate both their reconciliation with God and their reconciliation with the world. The reality celebrated in the eucharist—the gift of God's love in Jesus Christ—challenges every form of "injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom" (par. 20), and those who participate in the sacrament are called to participate actively in "this ongoing restoration of the world's situation and the human condition."

The fifth and last section on the meaning of the eucharist discusses its eschatological significance. The eucharist is the feast at which the Church gives thanks for the rule of God in the world and is a foretaste of the final renewal of creation. "Signs of this renewal are present in the world wherever the grace of God is manifest and human beings work for justice, love and peace" (par. 22). Because Jesus sought out the outcasts of his society, so Christians today are called "to be in solidarity with the outcast and to become signs of the love of Christ who lived and sacrificed himself for all and now gives himself in the eucharist" (par. 24). The eucharist, "brings into the present age a new reality which transforms Christians into the image of Christ and therefore makes them his effective witnesses" (par. 26).

The third and final part of the document briefly discusses the *celebration* of the eucharist. It first lists the various elements which traditionally have made up eucharistic liturgy, but it also acknowledges that not all churches celebrate the eucharist in the same manner. It urges that churches strive to discover a common eucharistic faith even if that does not result in uniform practice of the sacrament, for "a common eucharistic faith does not imply uniformity in either liturgy or practice" (par. 28).

Because it is Christ who gathers and nourishes the Church at the table, most churches use an ordained minister to preside at the sacrament. The minister presides in the name of Christ and is a symbol that the sacrament is not the church's creation but a gift from Christ.

BEM urges that the sacrament be celebrated "frequently," and declares that it is appropriate that it take place "at least every Sunday" (par. 31).

On the question of the use of the elements after the celebration of the sacrament, *BEM* makes two recommendations: first, that each church "respect the practices and piety of the others," and, second, that it be remembered that "the primary intention of reserving the elements is their distribution among the sick and those who are absent" (par. 32).

II. New Themes

For Presbyterians, there are several themes that may appear to be new in *BEM* interpretation of the Lord's Supper. Four of these are particularly important.

In the first place, the writers of the document clearly have been influenced by recent biblical and theological work on the eucharist. What theologians such as Geoffrey Wainwright and Juergen Moltmann have argued is that the New Testament understands the eucharist to be a sign in this world of the coming messianic feast.¹ The eucharist, therefore, is not simply the commemoration of a distant historical event, but a celebration in the present of the messianic feast and the reign of God.

The Book of Common Worship (1946) uses the words of institution in I Cor. 11:23-25, which conclude with "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." But with the exception of that single verse of Scripture there is not much evidence that *The Book of Common Worship* recognizes that the eucharist is a visible sign of an eschatological reality. And *The Worshipbook* (1970) is not much better. It does, however, give slightly more attention to the eschatological dimension of the sacrament. In reference to Jesus Christ, it states, "We trust him to overcome every power to hurt or divide us, so that, when you bring in your promised kingdom, we will celebrate victory with him." Given the lack of attention to eschatology in Presbyterian eucharistic liturgies, the emphasis of that theme in *BEM* is a significant contribution.

Secondly, *BEM* also emphasizes that an essential function of the sacrament is to nourish the people of God, but this nourishment is for only one purpose—to prepare the Church for mission. "The eucharist is precious food for missionaries, bread and wine for pilgrims on their apostolic journey" (par. 26). This relationship between the eucharist and the mission of the Church, however, is, at best, undeveloped in Presbyterian liturgies. There is scant attention given to the mission of the Church in Reformed confessions prior to those of the twentieth century. *BEM* correctly recognizes that the eucharist is a gift from God, but it is a gift that equips the Church for mission and witness.

Thirdly, because the eucharist is the sign of a new, eschatological reality, it is unlike other table gatherings in the world. Because Jesus Christ is the host of this table, *BEM* argues that the sacrament calls Christians to live "in solidarity with the outcast and to become signs of the love of God" (par. 21). Not only is the eucharist relevant to the particular situations of all people, not only does it evoke empathy from the Church for the oppressed, but *BEM* asserts something stronger—namely, that a Church that celebrates the sacrament is also a Church called to live in solidarity with the poor. Readers of contemporary the-

ology will clearly recognize the impact of liberation theology upon this document. The programmatic essay of liberation theology remains Gustavo Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation*. In the concluding section of the book, Gutierrez argues,

The place of the mission of the Church is where the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the creation of human brotherhood are indissolubly joined. This is what it means in an active and concrete way to be the sacrament of the salvation of the world.²

Finally, *BEM* ties the sacrament of the Supper to mission and to solidarity with the outcast, but it also insists that what the sacrament signifies is found wherever "human beings work for justice, love and peace" (par. 22). While Reformed theology traditionally has insisted on the close relation between theology and ethics, *BEM* may depict the ethical implications of the sacrament in a manner that is jarring to North American Presbyterian ears. According to *BEM*, one cannot take part in the eucharist and remain oblivious to social, economic and political structures which deny what the eucharist represents and anticipates. "All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ" (par. 20).

These "new themes" in *BEM*'s interpretation of the eucharist challenge Presbyterians (and most other Christians) to reassess their understanding and celebration of the sacrament. It may be that Presbyterians eventually will decide that these themes are not appropriate and should not be included in eucharistic liturgy, but first they will have to contend with the biblical and theological arguments that led the writers of *BEM* to make these new themes a major focus of their statement.

III. Theological Issues

In addition to these new themes in *BEM*, we must acknowledge that the document also presents Presbyterians with several difficult theological problems that have long been a part of ecumenical discussions of the sacrament. There is nothing new about these issues, but there may be something new in how *BEM* deals with them.

In the first place, *BEM* raises but does not answer the thorny question of the nature of a sacrament. If it had attempted to answer that question with clarity and precision, one suspects that ecumenical discussion might have proven impossible, for a few churches would have found their understanding of a sacrament affirmed in the document, but many would not.

While *BEM* does not clearly define what it means by "sacrament," it

does make use of the language of "sign" to describe the nature of the eucharist. The eucharist is a "living and effective sign" of Christ's sacrifice. The language of "sign," especially the claim that the sign is not merely "a calling to mind of what is past" but "both representation and anticipation" of God's mighty acts, might sound promising to Presbyterian ears. It is not clear, however, precisely how *BEM* understands a "sign." For example, by "sign" does *BEM* mean something compatible with Calvin's distinction between a sacrament and "the matter" of the sacrament?³ This distinction has been important to Reformed theologians because it has enabled them to insist, in Calvin's words, that "Christ is the matter or (if you prefer) the substance of all the sacraments: for in him they have all their firmness, and they do not promise anything apart from him."⁴ Hence, for Calvin, the sacrament is a sign of God's promise because it communicates Christ.⁵ But this distinction also enabled Calvin to argue against the Roman Catholics, on the one hand, that the sign (the elements) cannot be identified with the thing signified (Christ), and to argue against Zwingli, on the other hand, that the sign must not be divorced from the thing signified by turning the sacrament into a memorial.

According to Calvin, sacraments are "testimonies of God's grace and are like seals of the good will that he feels toward us," but they have no power unless they are received in faith.⁶ Similarly, *BEM* insists that while Christ's presence in the sacrament "does not depend on the faith of the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required" (par. 13). But while *BEM* insists that faith is necessary to discern Christ in the sacrament, it does not clarify the relation between the sacramental sign and the matter or substance of the sacrament. At issue, in part, is precisely what is meant by describing the sacrament as a "sign." Clearly, this is an important religious and theological issue for Presbyterians as for most other Christians, but it may be that we Presbyterians should not expect *BEM* to be any clearer than our own confessional documents. And as B. A. Gerrish has pointed out, the Reformed confessions are themselves ambiguous on this point.

For while the major confessions generally insist (against Zwingli) on a sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified, they are not agreed on the nature of the union.⁷

Because *BEM* does not clarify what it means by its claim that the sacrament is a "sign," it also leaves the question of Christ's "presence" in the sacrament ambiguous. And that, of course, is the second issue, which follows hard on the heels of the first. *BEM* affirms "Christ's real, living and active presence in the eucharist" (par. 13), but what pre-

cisely does it mean by "real presence?" In a sense, it may be that *BEM* must equivocate on this basic point because its resolution might first require the development of an ecumenical christology, a task of mammoth proportions. It has been apparent for some time that controversies over the mode of Christ's presence in the Supper are rooted in basic differences about christology, not the least of which is the question of where Christ is when the Lord's Supper is celebrated.

Calvin, of course, insists that Christ's real presence in the Supper is the work of the Holy Spirit, and *BEM* seems to concur. According to Calvin, the Spirit lifts us to Christ who is not locally present in the bread and the wine, but "is contained in heaven even to the Last Day."⁸ *BEM* avoids the question of what it means by "real presence" by ignoring the question of where Christ is when the sacrament is celebrated. Perhaps it is sufficient for Presbyterians, however, that *BEM* does affirm: 1)that Christ's presence in the sacrament must be discerned by faith; 2)that to faith Christ is a "real, living and active presence" in the eucharist; and 3)that it is the Spirit who "makes the crucified and risen Christ really present to us in the eucharistic meal" (par. 14).

Finally, some Presbyterians may be troubled by the way in which *BEM* interprets the relation between Word and sacrament. *BEM* does acknowledge that any celebration of the eucharist "properly includes the proclamation of the Word" (par. 12), but the document also states that the celebration of the sacrament is "the central act of the Church's worship" (par. 1). The latter claim will no doubt prompt some Presbyterians to wonder if *BEM* gives so much emphasis to the eucharist that it makes the proclamation of the Word secondary to the celebration of the sacrament.

IV. Conclusions

While Presbyterians must ask these and other questions of *BEM* if we are to honor our tradition and the intention of *BEM* itself, we must also remind ourselves of the sorry state of the Lord's Supper in many Presbyterian churches. Far too many Presbyterians care little or nothing for the theological issues that exercised Reformed theologians of the past. For many Presbyterians today, the Lord's Supper is not much more than a dreary memorial to a distant historical figure. If that is indeed the manner in which a significant number of Presbyterians participate in the Lord's Supper, then *BEM* can make a significant contribution to the worship life of the Presbyterian church by reminding us both of the distinctive claims of the Reformed tradition concerning the Supper and recalling us to the vitality of the Supper as a means by which God nourishes the Church.

FOOTNOTES

¹See Geoffrey Wainwright's two books, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) and *Doxology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), and Juergen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 242-260.

²Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 262.

³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 Vols., "The Library of Christian Classics, Vols. XX and XXI" (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), II: 1290-1291 (IV, 14, 15).

⁴*Ibid.*, II: 1291 (IV, 14, 16).

⁵*Ibid.*, II: 1282 (IV, 14, 7).

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷B. A. Gerrish, "Sign and Reality: The Lord's Supper in the Reformed Confessions" in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformed Heritage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 128. In the same volume, see also Gerrish's essay, "Gospel and Eucharist: John Calvin and the Lord's Supper," pp. 106-117.

⁸Calvin, *Institutes*, II: 1393 (IV, 17, 26).

A REFLECTION ON MINISTRY

Cynthia M. Campbell

What is ministry, who should be ordained, to what and by whom? These questions haunt not only most denominations but the ecumenical community as well. Given the variety of confessional traditions represented at the Faith and Order Commission, it is remarkable that a chapter on the nature and function of ministry was even attempted in a "consensus document." But attempted it was and the product represents a challenge to almost all of the participating churches. From a Reformed perspective, the document raises almost as many problems as it solves, but its publication presents us with a significant opportunity to consider again what our tradition and condition suggest about the nature and purpose of ministry in the church.

The Ministry Chapter: A Brief Overview

The chapter on the ministry is divided into six topical sections and follows the same format as the rest of the document in presenting both "main text" and "commentary" as a way to indicate where there is in fact consensus and where issues still require study or amplification. The document begins in a way that should please Reformed ears: the matter of ministry begins with the ministry of the whole people of God. As humanity is redeemed and renewed in baptism, so gifts are given by the Holy Spirit which create a new community and empower that community to pour itself out for the world. Within this community individuals are called to discern the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the community and for service to the world.

From this foundation, the question is then raised: how is this community called the church to be ordered and how are the gifts given by God to be best used for God's work? Because *ordained* ministry is rightly understood only within the context of the ministry of the people of God, such leadership is described primarily as service to the community: "ordained ministers can fulfill their calling only in and for the community. They cannot dispense with the recognition, the sup-

port and the encouragement of the community" (12)¹. Similarly, the authority of the ordained ministers " . . . is exercised with the cooperation of the whole community" (15). The ordained ministry serves a vital function in drawing together the people of God. In particular it draws people together around the Lord's Table, but the document makes it clear that this leadership role exists for the *community* and not for the benefit of the individual minister.

Having established the basis of ministry the document turns to the "forms" of ministry and presents its case for the "threefold office." The document recognizes that the New Testament does not present a unified picture of leadership in the early church, nevertheless it argues that the pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon emerges early on in the life of the church as a differentiation of office and function. Far from being an accident of history or a relic of the past the document suggests that this threefold form " . . . may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a *means for achieving it*" (22; emphasis added.)

The value of the threefold pattern of ministry is that it highlights three distinct aspects of ministry which do indeed seem to exist in almost all contemporary forms of ministry. These aspects are oversight, pastoral leadership and service. In this view, it is the task of those exercising the episcopal office to guard and guide the work of other ministers and communities in a given area. The office of the bishop thus provides a focus of unity, orthodoxy and stability for the church. The presbyter functions in cooperation with those exercising the ministry of oversight by caring for a particular community and by representing that community in liturgical (especially eucharistic) leadership. The deacons represent the work of the people of God as they serve the needs of the broader community and as they share in liturgical leadership. While specific functions and titles may vary, the document suggests that this or a similar threefold division presents a summary of ordained ministry for the whole church.

One of the unique aspects of this section is a discussion of criteria for the exercise of the ordained ministry. Three guiding principles are suggested which summarize the way in which ministry ought to be related to the life of the church. Ministry should be *personal*: i.e., as the minister carries on the personal work of Christ in calling persons to new life; *collegial*, i.e. as ministers function as partners with one another in leadership; and *communal*, i.e. as ministers serve in and on behalf of the community of God's people. As the commentary rightly suggests, these three principles are intended to be exercised simultaneously, and churches should avoid emphasizing any one to the exclusion of the others.

Having established the nature and ordering of ministry, the docu-

ment turns to the question of authority in a chapter entitled "succession in the apostolic tradition." The very wording here suggests the delicacy with which this topic is approached. The first task is to distinguish between the "apostolic tradition" and apostolic succession in ministry. The former is defined as "continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles," including such marks as witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation of the gospel, celebration of the sacraments, prayer and service. Assuming that this apostolic tradition is one which all churches share and affirm, the document urges consideration of the notion that apostolic *succession in ministry* (or specifically episcopal succession) provides "a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church" (38). The value at stake here is the orderly transmission of the ordained ministry from one generation to another and the protection of the essentials of the apostolic faith. Almost every church recognizes the value of such order and has procedures for the recognition, examination and ordination of church leaders. The issue which this document raises is whether or not ordination by persons exercising the episcopal ministry who have themselves been ordained in proper succession is not the most concrete way of symbolizing the unity and continuity of the church.

The question of the authority to ordain leads directly to the question of the nature of ordination itself. Again, Reformed Christians will find familiar the view of the call to ministry: personal awareness of a call from God must be tested and confirmed by the church before ordination can take place. The act of ordaining should occur in the context of public worship and includes the laying on of hands, an invocation of the Holy Spirit and recognition of the mutual commitment between the one ordained and the church. To this readily acceptable list, the document adds that ordination include a "sacramental sign," a concept which seems to be amplified by the statement that "God . . . enters sacramentally into contingent, historical forms of human relationship and uses them for his purpose" (43b). Obviously, the question of what "sacramentally" means is a critical issue and one on which the document sheds little light.

The document concludes with a discussion of possible steps toward the mutual recognition of ordained ministries. In this chapter we see the clear intention of the authors that this be more than a study document. Rather, it is hoped that such consensus will bear fruit in healing some of the breaches which have divided the Christian Church for centuries. The wording of the goal is in itself instructive: it is not uniformity of order but a mutual recognition of the various forms of ministry by all churches. It is clear that this entails the admission that differences exist and that some are likely to remain. But it is most

interesting to note that the obstacle to mutual recognition most discussed is the matter of episcopal order and succession. While churches which maintain episcopal traditions are asked to recognize the existence of the *substance* of that tradition in churches which do not continue the form, the burden seems to fall on churches without that formal tradition to recognize in episcopal succession a sign which "will strengthen and deepen [apostolic] continuity" (53b). Other matters are clearly entailed in the matter of mutual recognition: the ordination of women is a matter of primary importance which will receive comment later; the question of whether mutual *recognition* needs to be accompanied by "mutual laying on of hands" raises question as to whether this is really recognition or re-ordination. But the centrality which the document gives to the matter of apostolic succession sets the stage for a critique of this document which can be made from the Reformed perspective.

The Ministry Chapter: A Reformed Critique

As indicated above, the ministry chapter makes significant contribution to theological discussion by grounding its concept of ministry not simply in the church but in the ministry which belongs to all of God's people. It recognizes that the fundamental ministry is that which all Christians have by virtue of their baptism to serve Christ and neighbor. The Reformed tradition concurs that it is in service of this primary ministry that certain persons are ordained. This perspective is what the document itself means by the "communal" dimension: the ministry of ordained persons depends on and serves the community as a whole.

The document is helpful as well in the way in which it invites us to see that the pattern of oversight, pastoral ministry and service have been retained in many and various forms of ecclesiastical organization. Such interpretation at very least eases the defensiveness so common in ecumenical discussions when it appears that unity can only be achieved by conformity. Further, in its formulation of the three characteristics of ministry (personal, collegial, communal), we are reminded that no one church has expressed all three dimensions adequately at any one time. From this perspective, then, there are areas of commonality which all can celebrate and areas in which all can grow.

While these are certainly contributions to the substance and process of ecumenical conversation, there remain aspects of this document which are troublesome to those who approach the matter of ministry from a Reformed perspective. The difficulty can be located in the emphasis which the document places on the "personal" dimension of ministry. Despite the use of the communal dimension in passages quoted above, there remains a stress on the ordained person as focal

point of ministry:

In order to fulfill its mission, the Church needs *persons* who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, *a focus of its unity*. The ministry of such persons, who since very early times have been ordained, is constitutive for the life and witness of the Church (8, emphasis added).

In a later paragraph we read that "the presence of [ordained ministers] reminds the community of the divine initiative, and of the dependence of the Church on Jesus Christ . . ." (12). Such statements combine to suggest the notion that the ordained person does not so much represent the people before God as he or she represents God before the people.

Without becoming mired in debates along old confessional lines, it does seem well to ask to what extent the notion of "representing Christ" is in fact a useful category with respect to ordained ministry. On the one hand, there are clearly aspects of the work of Christ which cannot be represented by *any* human being: e.g., Christ's role as mediator of redemption. On the other hand, surely the representation of Christ in terms of service and love for one another, e.g., being Christ's Body in the world today, is the essence of the ministry of *all* Christians and of the church itself. When ordained ministers become "representatives" of Christ, there is real danger of obscuring both of these important aspects of the question of representation itself.

This personal dimension is even more noticeable with respect to the office of bishop and the relation of that office to the unity of the church (29). In a statement added between the 1981 and 1982 versions of this chapter, the document calls on historical precedent in defining this office. "In this context [of the early church] the bishop's ministry was a focus of unity within the whole community" (20). The question of substance is *not* historical interpretation. The question is whether or not the church today needs or should have *an office* and a *person* who symbolizes the unity of the Body of Christ.

As portrayed here the primary function of the episcopal office is maintaining the church's continuity with the ministry and faith of the apostles. While recognizing that there is a distinction between the apostolic faith and the succession of bishops, the document concludes as noted above with exhortation for non-episcopal traditions to recognize the value of the continuity of episcopal ordination. The document appeals here to the concept of the episcopal office as a "sign" of unity, continuity and order. While many would agree that such a symbolic figure is often of real importance, especially in ecumenical situations,

Reformed Christians are reluctant to assign such duties to any one person for more than a limited period of time. (Recent discussions at General Assembly related to the job description of the Stated Clerk of The General Assembly with respect to the clerk's representative function on behalf of the denomination is an excellent illustration.):

But this document seems to see the bishop as sign or symbol in ways which extend beyond liturgical or ecumenical occasions. Surely entailed here is a question of authority: authority in doctrine, in ordination and/or in policy-making. A liturgical sign is powerful when it represents other real authority in the life of the church, but therein lies the problem. Who should, in fact, have the authority to determine that new doctrinal statements are in accord with the faith of the apostles? How should the church's testing and confirmation of an individual's call to ministry be administered? In what manner should various parts of the church come to terms with its particular mission in light of the commission it finds in scripture? Indeed, these are the functions of the ministry of oversight; they are vital to the health and continuity of the church. The issue is whether such oversight is best conducted in the person of a bishop or collegially by ministers and church members together. To put it another way, the Reformed tradition questions whether ordination by a process of apostolic succession adds anything to the effectiveness of oversight itself.

Ministry: A Reformed Contribution

Given this basic critique of ministry, it is right to ask what the Reformed tradition adds to theological discussion of this topic. Reformed Christians have never shied away from the issue of leadership in the church. From the earliest days, the Reformed tradition has argued that leaders and offices in the church are established for the maintenance of order and for the building up of the community. But *ministry* properly belongs to the people and leadership is understood to consist in those persons set aside by the community to guide and assist the people in their own ministry. On this view a person is ordained to serve a particular purpose or perform a special *function* for which the person is qualified and trained. The emphasis in ordination, then, is on the *work* of ministry to which the person is ordained and not on the person ordained.

The document contains several statements regarding the way in which the ordained person recalls to the church its dependence on Christ. But that dependence need not be focused on the person of the minister. The sacraments provide a helpful analogy in that they, like ordination, remind us of God's accommodation to our human condition: we are creatures of sight, sound, taste and touch, and God chooses to communicate with us through symbols and media which

we understand. So also with ministry: we humans exist and grow in human relationships, and God's choice of human instruments through which to communicate evidences God's willingness to meet us where we are. Ministry, like the sacraments, reminds us of our dependence. But both ministry and sacraments point beyond themselves to the God who cannot be adequately represented by any person or symbol.

In contrast to views of ministry which vest authority primarily in individuals, the Reformed tradition has always stressed what this document calls the collegial and communal dimensions of ministry. In this view, ministry is never complete in the action of an individual pastor. Not only does a pastor serve only upon election by the people, but a pastor has virtually no authority, sacramental or jurisdictional, without those others elected and ordained to share in and complete the ministry. To say it another way, ministry in the Reformed tradition is seen in its fullness or unity only when pastor and elders are gathered around a table. It may be the Lord's Table in public worship or the session table, but the ministry of word, sacrament and governance or discipline cannot take place in a Reformed church unless both ministers and elders are present and participating.

The same is true in the ministry of oversight. These functions of seeing to the welfare of particular churches, selecting and approving persons for ministry of the word, reviewing the adequacy of doctrine taught and ministries undertaken: all of these functions rest first of all with the presbytery which is a communal or collegial expression of the ministry of bishops. It may be the case that oversight carried on in this manner is more time-consuming and perhaps less uniform than when it is undertaken by a single individual. But to a Reformed mind the symbolism of unity is even stronger. What is more expressive of unity than watching or participating in a deliberative body where all views are needed in the process of discerning the will of God?²

Ministry in the Reformed tradition is essentially and necessarily collegial. Those who experience ministry in this form have an understanding of the *body* of Christ with its different and interdependent parts which is deeply rooted in the life of the early church and the people of Israel. It may be that this tradition has lost some of the personal dimension as the document suggests, but surely greater emphasis needs to be seen in future ecumenical statements on the collegiality which is equally a vital aspect of ministry.

The importance of collegiality manifests itself in other issues addressed in this document as well. It has already been noted that the matter of "apostolic succession" receives a great deal of attention. The underlying issue here is continuity of authority to determine what the apostolic tradition in fact is, and Reformed churches tend to define such continuity in terms of faithfulness to scripture as interpreted by

creeds and confessions. On this view, continuity is to be determined more by doctrine than by order. Further, it is important to note how doctrinal standards are arrived at: they are the product of councils or assemblies duly elected and confirmed by the church through its regular governing bodies. Far from diminishing the role of apostolic traditions, the Reformed churches hold that it is the responsibility of the whole church in each new day to measure its faith against the faith of the apostles and, if need be, to confess it again in words chosen by deliberative bodies which seek to hear the faith expressed anew in their day. Indeed, Reformed Christians could point to the process of composition, discussion and revision which this document has undergone as an example of maintaining continuity with the apostolic tradition.

No discussion of the collegiality of ministry in the Reformed tradition would be complete without a discussion of ordination to the offices of elder and deacon. As indicated above, ministry is not complete in this tradition without what many insist upon calling "ordained lay persons." There are times in ecumenical conversations when one begins to think that one is talking to a wall when this topic comes up. No one except Presbyterians (and not all of them) seem to understand this hybrid: persons who are called, elected, examined and ordained to office, on the one hand, but who are lay persons (that is, nonprofessional and noncompensated) on the other. Presbyterians who read documents such as this wonder where that office fits (if anywhere) and whether there is any longer any virtue in attempting to make the rest of the world understand what we are up to.

The offices of elder and deacon in the Presbyterian church have, however, at least two features which make important contributions to theological discussions of the nature of ministry. In the first place, such offices make clear that ministry is not confined to persons who are professionally educated and compensated for ministry. Their very existence has at least the potential for fighting the "clericalization" of ministry which so many rightly decry. In the second place, the very structure of Presbyterian polity reinforces, because it *requires*, a shared or collegial style of ministry. While practice often lags behind theory, the ministry of assisting in the sacraments and deliberating about the life and health of the church are *ministries* to which nonprofessional persons are called and ministries which are as vital to the church as those of proclaiming the word and presiding at the sacraments. Despite our moments of unclarity, Reformed Christians still have a concept worth fighting for in the offices of elder and deacon.

A final area exists in which Reformed Christians have made at least a modest contribution and which deserves comment before concluding this examination of the question of ministry. For the better part of

this century Presbyterians in America have struggled with the ordination of women. As a result, the presence of women in all three offices of ministry is now so deeply rooted as to be integral to the ongoing health of the denomination. Presbyterians were not the first to accept the ordination of women and some Presbyterians remain unconvinced. But we have come to see women in ministry as God's gift and intent for the new being of the baptized community where there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female.

The statements on the ordination of women in this document bear close examination. In the body of the document (18) it is simply acknowledged that some churches ordain women and some do not. The commentary expands this to recognize that the churches which do ordain women do so for theological reasons and that none "has found reason to reconsider its decision." The following paragraph, however, contains an interesting alteration between the 1981 and 1982 versions. Discussing those churches which do not ordain women, the first draft stated the tradition against such ordination "must not be lightly ignored." The second version says that this tradition "must not be set aside." It would at least *appear* that this represents a retreat from openness on the part of those opposed to the ordination of women and a willingness of the rest of the churches to permit such a retreat. In a later discussion the document concludes that difference on this matter should not present a substantive obstacle to mutual recognition, but rather both traditions should be open to learn from the other.

These rather confusing statements present significant problems to a denomination which is accustomed to the leadership of women. What is it that we can learn from the tradition which denies ordination to women except to remove from office thousands of ordained women and revert to a theological position which we have rejected? The matter is on the one hand a practical matter of available leadership. But it is fundamentally a theological question which entails both the doctrine of humanity and the doctrine of the freedom of God. The ordination of women is a gift not only of leadership but of theological awareness which Presbyterians and others bring to the ecumenical church and which must not be lost.

Concluding Observations

What has this statement on ministry accomplished? Does it provide a basis for mutual recognition and a platform from which to move towards greater reunion? At the very least, the document is helpful because it is sufficiently provocative to cause further conversation. Ministry, perhaps more than the sacraments, is an area where the church is in real confusion and not a little flux. By highlighting the threefold offices, the document causes us to ask what functions are

essential to ministry. By identifying the three dimensions of the personal, collegial and communal, the document asks us to reconsider how ministry is conducted. By grounding ministry in the work of the whole people of God, the document provides the one foundation upon which all can and should agree. Obviously there are areas of conflict and matters where debate can profitably be held. But debate is something which Reformed Christians in particular should neither fear nor weary of because it is only through debate under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the unity of the Body of Christ will be approximated this side of the Kingdom of God.

FOOTNOTES

¹World Council of Churches, Faith and Order Commission, *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*. Geneva, 1982. Numbers refer to paragraphs in the text and are hereafter cited in the body of this article.

²It should be noted that one paragraph (27) calls attention to this collegial dimension and urges that all church members be represented in decision-making on regional levels.

BAPTISM, EUCHARIST, AND MINISTRY A Lutheran's Response

Hilmer C. Krause

In 1982, in simultaneous and separate convention actions, the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches overwhelmingly voted to form a new Lutheran church. In the same conventions, there was also a resounding affirmation of a declaration of "shared eucharist" with the Protestant Episcopal Church, U.S.A. By convention time, both actions were predictable. Both were also unprecedented!

It was not the idea of merger that was new; it's the way it was done. U.S. Lutheran history is the story of the continuing merger of many small synods from frontier times until the present. Always the mergers resulted from thoroughly worked-out doctrinal agreements and union plans presented for convention approval in finished form. This time it was different. The vote for union was taken first. Then a commission was formed to work out the details and given six years to accomplish the task. The commission was not authorized to fail.

The same kind of procedure was followed in making the declaration of a shared eucharist with Episcopalians. In the face of a stated lack of theological agreement on several points, the two communions agreed to this degree of fellowship at the altar and pulpit, to work together in shared church projects and to keep talking about differences. Subsequently the presiding bishop of the American Lutheran Church publicly declared himself in favor of seeking similar agreements with Presbyterians and Roman Catholics on the basis of our long-standing dialogues with both communions.¹

I draw a very tentative conclusion. These convention actions, taken at about the same time that the Lima document was published, represent a surprisingly new behavioral mode for the majority of U.S. Lutherans which will affect their response to the document on baptism, eucharist and ministry. The U.S. Lutheran ecumenical outreach appears to be warmer than it has been. There is clearly more willingness to stress marks of agreement rather than points of difference

between Lutherans and other Christians.

There is another interesting indication of attitudes in a process of change. The Task Force on Theology of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church finished its first draft of a theological foundation document for the three groups in the process of union last April. The paper was sent to 525 teachers of theology in the American Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church of America, and Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches with an invitation for comment and constructive criticism. Only 45 theologians responded. Those of us who did respond were given a chance to comment on the second draft. The third draft was disseminated to the congregations and district conventions for study.

Strange? Indeed! Why did 480 Lutheran theologians not even trouble themselves to offer comment on such a formative document? One can only speculate on the reasons and imagine a half dozen possibilities which range from complimentary to the contrary.

But quite aside from speculations on the motives of theologians, the phenomenon itself points toward a second tentative conclusion. It seems clear that the great majority of U.S. Lutheran theologians are in no mood to be argumentative about the exact wording of such documents; they are not in a polemical stance. This relatively recent relaxation of attitude is likely to have at least a ripple effect on the way in which the Lima document is received and viewed by Lutheran churches in the U.S. We are more likely to stress the marks of confluence than the notes of dissent in doctrine.

I have been telling these in-house stories because of the nature of the assignment given me by the APTS Bulletin Committee. The committee wanted a brief article which would be a Lutheran's evaluation of the ecumenical value of the paper on baptism, eucharist and ministry.

My tentative conclusions would suggest that present mainstream U.S. Lutheran behavior is much more like that of the conventional churches (those that stress conformity in practice) than that of the more staid confessional church (one that stresses conformity in doctrine) we have traditionally been. If this is accurate, it's important. It means that our proposed theological statement for a "New Lutheran Church" will have more effect on our response to Lima than will the citing of historical formulae from the sixteenth century Lutheran symbols.

So the best way to speak to the specific question is to look at *BEM* through the windows of the most recent actions and statements of these mainstream Lutheran groups which in many ways find themselves in a state of political and theological flux. To attempt to broaden the perspective to include other Lutheran denominations would likely be foolhardy in a paper as brief as this one.

To use the word "flux" is to risk an overstatement and invite a possible misunderstanding. It is not the theological foundations that are shifting as much as the attitudes about how those foundations should be used and especially how they should be employed vis a vis other Christian communions.

For instance, the Task Force on Theology is convinced that it is neither necessary nor appropriate to produce a new confession of faith. They state that:

The faith in which we unite is the historic faith of the church, rooted and grounded in God's revelation as recorded in sacred Scriptures and affirmed and confessed in the ancient creeds and the Lutheran confessional writings.²

They single out the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Augsburg Confession, and Luther's Small Catechism as being of special importance to the confessional stance.

That's the old doctrinal foundation. The new attitude is reflected in the care taken to specify how those confessional documents are to be received:

These ancient creeds and the Lutheran confessional writings are, of course, historically conditioned confessions of faith. They were produced to meet specific needs or to resolve controversies in the church's history. The ancient creeds are, nevertheless, "glorious confessions of faith" (Formula of Concord) which continue to serve the church today.³

So the foundations are affirmed, but not in a fundamentalist fashion.

There is a further relaxation to be found in the talk about contemporary issues of faith.

There are issues which confront the church in our time which are not addressed in the ancient creeds and the Lutheran confessional writings It may be that one or more of those issues will require the churches to formulate the faith anew, but such a formulation should be, as much as possible, an ecumenical venture.⁴

These brief quotations begin, then, to move toward an answer to the question about the possible impact or value of the ecumenical document in the Lutheran circles under discussion. *BEM* will be taken seriously in a new church that intends to take its ecumenical responsibilities seriously. The proposed foundation document makes it quite clear:

In reference to the unity of the church, it is particularly the ecumenical dimension which comes to mind The new church should therefore seek to be an instrument for the unity of the whole church, understanding itself to be part of a confessional movement within Christendom, a pilgrim people and a servant church, moving and being moved toward the unity that is in its one Lord.⁵

Following the spirit of the above quotation, the World Council of Churches document has already been formally "received" at the Lutheran Church in America convention held at Toronto last July. So the document finds its place in the "mind" of the church, especially as it relates to ecumenical theological consideration. *BEM* is received in all seriousness. It will have an impact on the church.

So the conclusion I come to in the case of the church under consideration is that the mind of the receiving churches will speak more to the question of the ecumenical value and impact of the Lima document than the exact wording of the document itself. This in no way denigrates or fails to recognize the great care and prolonged effort expended on the elaboration of the document. It does, however, recognize some truth in the old maxim that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Although there is every reason to celebrate an increase in ecumenical concern, one cannot forget that Lutherans move from a well-defined confessional base. This means that some portions of the *BEM* are sure to be problematic. The most sensitive of those portions can be identified with relative ease and some reactions are predictable.

In the sections on baptism, I would see the most likely point of reaction to be found in IV. Baptismal Practice, and Commentary (12) which treat the baptism of believers and infants. The commentary alleges that:

The differences between infant and believers' baptism become less sharp when it is recognized that both forms of baptism embody God's own initiative in Christ and express a response of faith made within the believing community.

A Lutheran position would well argue that it is precisely the question of God's initiative that sharpens the distinction between the two practices. The practice of baptizing infants who can do nothing for themselves is predicated on a complete reliance on God's initiative and promise of grace. On the other hand, the practice of baptizing only those who are capable of making a confession of faith for themselves seems predicated on the notion that human capacities give value or validity to the act, at least in some synergistic fashion. This is unten-

able for most Lutherans. There are other points which may represent difficulties of a lesser magnitude; this one, however, is sure to meet resistance.

The portion on eucharist is likely to be the most pleasing part of the document to Lutherans. Some of the wording matches almost exactly the historical Lutheran symbols. This is especially true of II,B,13 on the meaning of the eucharist:

The words and acts of Christ at the institution of the eucharist stand at the heart of the celebration; the eucharistic meal is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrament of his real presence The Church confesses Christ's real, living and active presence in the eucharist. While Christ's real presence in the eucharist does not depend on the faith of the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required.

Even in paragraphs where the wording is less familiar, Lutheran understandings and practices can usually be accommodated with ease. This section on eucharist should enjoy a favorable response. The beauty here is that the *BEM* statement represents an enrichment of formal Lutheran statements; it is an addition, not a detraction.

The section on ministry will be the most difficult for Lutherans. Only part of the difficulty lies within the Lima document, i.e. the portion on ministry shows the least confluence. The other part of the problem lies within the Lutheran bodies which do not entirely know their own mind. The section on ministry is also the vaguest and least satisfying part of the report of the Task Force on Theology of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church.

Lutherans can be tractable with regard to form. For them, the polity of the church has not been an article of faith and they have run the spectrum from congregational to presbyterial to episcopal government. Someone coined the word "episcopopresbygational" in an attempt to describe U.S. Lutheran polity. So form, per se, should not be the biggest problem.

At least one strong trend is evident in the proposed Lutheran documents. That is the concern that the new church be an "inclusive" one. Implications of inclusivity for ministry include a strong affirmation of the rightful place of ordained women and a recognition of a variety of specific ministries as distinct from the professional clergy. The Lima document will be cited for inadequacies on both counts. It fails in its affirmation of the ordination of women and remains narrow in its focus on professional clergy.

All in all, the ecumenical climate for Lutherans is good. The concept of an inclusive church will foment ecumenical concern. Our former

insularity is rapidly weakening. The ecumenical value of *BEM* is thereby enhanced for U.S. Lutherans. We will be able to rejoice in the degree of confluence we find there and take the document seriously enough to disagree spiritedly when it may seem appropriate.

FOOTNOTE

¹David Preuss, "From the Presiding Bishop," *The Lutheran Standard*, January 20, 1984, Vol. 24:2, p. 29.

²*Report of the Task Force on Theology of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church*, Art. 1,3. p.3.

³Ibid. Art. 1,15. p. 4.

⁴Ibid. Art. 1,5. p. 3.

⁵Ibid. Art. II, part 13,42.

THE ECUMENICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LIMA DOCUMENT FROM AN ANGLICAN PERSPECTIVE

Paul T. Coke

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry first came to my attention when the deans of the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest arranged a joint faculty seminar to discuss the Lima Document. That text, the fruit of many years of ecumenical study, prayerful reflection, and practical give-and-take among the three hundred member churches that comprise the World Council of Churches, was also for us the occasion for a cordial time of local ecumenical action to listen to each other responding to the essays and to share with each other as colleagues, neighbors, fellow Christians and friends where we were, personally and corporately, in relationship to baptism, eucharist and ministry. I was grateful for that time of fellowship and am delighted to have been asked to offer this written response to the document as further participation in our ecumenical work together.

As an Episcopalian I read the Preface to the Lima Document with a sense of familiarity and feelings that we are on course and heading in the right direction. When we read there about the fifty-year process of study stretching back to the first Faith and Order Conference at Lausanne in 1927, voila! there was the Episcopal bishop of Western New York, Charles Henry Brent, as one of its organizers and in fact its president. And Archbishop William Temple (1881-1944) also came to mind as an active supporter of the Faith and Order work of the ecumenical movement, our most perceptive Anglican theologian since his predecessor, Anselm of Canterbury. Finally from a personal point of view the fact that Frère Max Thurian of Taizé had served as president of the steering group between plenary commission meetings since 1979 certainly struck the right chord in my own experience, for nowhere as an Anglican Christian have I felt more welcome than as a guest at Taizé, and never have I known a more meaningful and fruitful Ash Wednesday than when a brother of Taizé shared a quiet day with us at our Episcopal seminary in Austin. (**Editor's Note:** A Reformed monastic

movement founded by Roger Schultz, a Swiss Reformed pastor, centered in the French town of Taizé; it has since become wholly ecumenical in its work and witness.)

Lex orandi lex credendi: how and what we pray determines and informs how and what we believe. That fact that prayer at Taizé is so vital and inspiring a reality for those fortunate enough to share in it is a powerful witness for the validity of the theology evoked by that ecumenical community. It seems to me that prayer and worship have also been the presupposition and foundation for the work we have in the Lima Document – and that, I am sure, is the right way to do theology.

While there are, of course, difficult problems about our understandings of baptism, eucharist and ministry which are in tension, if not contradiction, for many Christians, nonetheless to be an Episcopalian in the world-wide Anglican communion means for me to be grateful for the real progress in mutual understanding which has already been achieved and to enjoy the fellowship of other Christian churches as we work together in search of more “promising convergences in [our] shared convictions and perspectives.”¹

There is thus an inherent optimism and hopefulness I discover in myself which I bring to an ecumenical response to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* from an Episcopal perspective. We American Episcopalians tend, I think, to be a cheerful lot (our friends warn us politely about “cheap grace” and churchy frivolity if not triviality), and within the Anglican heritage we delight in there is a strong element of natural theology (to the shock of our Barthian neighbors) and the belief that God’s grace does indeed perfect rather than destroy nature. So as I begin this ecumenical conversation as an American Episcopalian I feel somewhat ill at ease about our optimism and a wee bit guilty about the pleasure I feel in liturgical worship and the enjoyment I have, for example, in reading the cheerful theology of John Macquarrie² and the enjoyable sermons of Austin Farrer.³

Having tried to share with you my *Vorverständnis*—where I am in my own self-understanding and the predilections I bring to our task, I’d like us now to turn to the text on Baptism. A first reading of the text led me to wonder at the frequency of the use of the term *sign* which appears in it and at the neglect of the word *initiation* or the concept *Christian beginning*, which came to my Anglican mind as the primary meaning of Holy Baptism. And I see that my first response to the text reflects our Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, whose first sentence about baptism states that “Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ’s Body the Church.”⁴

A second reading of the text confirmed my puzzlement over the use of *sign* in different contexts and in rather contradictory ways—for example, (Baptism, par. 2): “Baptism is the sign of new life through

Jesus Christ"; (par. 6) "Baptism is a sign and seal of our common discipleship"; E: "The Sign of the Kingdom"; "Baptism initiates the reality of the new life . . . it is a sign of the Kingdom of God . . ." And on page 6 the word *sign* is used four times, the plural *signs* once, in five quite different contexts. I fear that the word runs the risk here of degenerating into mumbo jumbo.

Now, of course, in the history of our faith we have had important shibboleths and okay-words that show we are members of the club, right-thinking churchpersons, sound.⁵ *Homoousios*, the ineffable mystery of the Nicene Creed, comes to mind as an ambiguous, much debated, and eventually helpful compromise term from the fourth century. And perhaps *sign* is one of these omnibus terms whose very ambiguity is an asset, saving the theologians from rushing in where angels fear to tread. But as an Episcopalian it would come more natural for me to speak of the sacrament of Holy Baptism, *sacramentum* representing *mysterion*, the holy mystery of Christian beginning, the new creation to which by the grace of God each of us is called.

One neighborly suggestion I'd like to make as an Anglican. That is, to consider the idea offered by Ian T. Ramsey, the late Bishop of Durham, that an everyday word needs a qualifier to evoke a religious understanding of it.⁶ *Sign* by itself is an exceptionally vague term. If we could add a qualifier that would point us in the right direction it would be helpful. *God-given sign* would be excellent theology but awkward English. Perhaps if we think *holy sign* when we see the word *sign* being used in the text on baptism we will understand each other better.

I also find a curious note of triumphalism in the statement in II,3: "Thus those baptized are no longer slaves to sin, but free. Fully identified with the death of Christ, they are buried with him and are raised here and now to a new life . . ." The passage needs more eschatology – we *begin* our pilgrimage in baptism towards the freedom of the new creation in Christ, but we can and do fall into sin again, for all too often our pilgrim's progress will be detoured by self-indulgence and deterred by complacency. But only if and by God's continuing his new creation in us begun at baptism dare we trust that we will finally and fully attain that new life, and only in God's good time. This sentiment is beautifully expressed at III, 9: "Baptism is related not only to momentary experience, but a life-long growth into Christ."

And in a final reading of the text I am suddenly struck by the feeling, how odd it is to note the absence of any mention of joy in this discussion of baptism. Surely that is an essential element for an adult who has come to Christ in believer's baptism or for the infants and their family and friends, rejoicing in new life and safe delivery and hope for a new member of the family and a future generation coming into being. Rejoice! Praise the Lord for life, as in the good Jewish toast

L'Chaim, and thank God our Creator for his new creation, begun in holy baptism.

Eucharist, the great thanksgiving of the Church (*eucharistia*) rightly follows both as section two of the Lima Document and in Christian experience as the natural and ongoing expression of the joy and new creation celebrated in baptism. Again sign-language is important in the second paragraph of this section which comments on the scriptural data offered in the first paragraph on *Eucharist*. But here I find the use and development of *sign* considerably more circumspect and logically illuminating. We are told (1): the feeding of the multitudes is a *sign* for the nearness of the Kingdom; (2): "the eucharist continues these meals of Jesus during his earthly life and after his resurrection, always as a *sign* of the kingdom"; (3): "Christ commanded his disciples thus to remember and encounter him in this sacramental meal . . ."; (4): and then the eucharist is called "a sacramental meal which by visible *signs* communicates" God's love to us. Use (1) of *sign* is quite general; but use (2) modifies the eucharist *always* as a sign which suggests a logic that the eucharist, as a sign, is an "*always sign*," that is, an eternal sign—here we have a helpful qualifier for *sign* which moves us towards the transcendent, numinous, holy qualities we recognize in this particular type of sign. Use (3) introduces a synonym for the eucharist as sign, which is sacramental meal; again the vertical quality of the sign as special meal is clarified, even if we may well wonder what *sacrament* means! At least we are heading in the right direction.⁷ Finally use (4) joins the two ideas into a meaningful whole—the eucharist as a meal which is *sacramental* and has *visible* signs. The qualifiers *sacramental* and *visible* warn us that we are using special logic in our religious discourse, not pious mumbo jumbo or pretentious nonsense: the care with which these terms are employed and developed encourages us and others to reflect more about the rich meaning and wonderful dimensions of this "central act of the Church's worship."⁸

Section II "The Meaning of the Eucharist" is a splendid statement, beautifully balanced and carefully articulated. I have nothing to add to it but a grateful *amen*, and delight over the sensitive use of its sign-language. Also it is excellent that the biblical idea of *anamnesis* is used to show that the sign is living and effective, the "present efficacy of God's work . . ." And at II, B,7, we have explicit reference to Christian joy (it's about time!), as well as mention of it at II,B,9.

Part D on the Eucharist as Communion of the Faithful is also very good: in opposition to the excessive individualism which American Protestantism so easily slips into (the religious Lone Ranger riding into God's golden sunset, or the self-centered individual congregation so pleased with itself it tells the neighborhood, *de facto*, to go to hell), "eucharistic celebrations always have to do with the whole Church . . .

[and] involves the believer in the central event of the world's history. As participants in the eucharist, therefore, we prove inconsistent if we are not actively participating in this ongoing restoration of the world's situation and the human condition."⁹

My own feelings of commitment to mission and ministry to the world, beginning with the neighborhood and parish where we live and worship, would incline me to use stronger language than "inconsistent." As we Episcopalians have begun to pray in our recently revised prayerbook: "Lord God of our Fathers; God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: Open our eyes to see your hand at work in the world about us. Deliver us from the presumption of coming to this Table for solace only, and not for strength; for pardon only, and not for renewal. Let the grace of this Holy Communion make us one body, one spirit in Christ, that we may worthily serve the world in his name."¹⁰ *Reconciliation* is mentioned twice in D,20: that term, surely, is *le mot juste* for the meaning of the eucharist for us. At Taizé worship takes place in the chapel of reconciliation. Again *lex orandi lex credendi est*: the practice of reconciliation in our worship together as Christians enables us to become an active part of "the reconciling presence of God in human history."¹¹

The text is also excellent in its discussion of Christ's "real presence" (B,13) and in the accompanying commentary (13 and 15). Commentary (19) rightly faces the belittling of the eucharist caused by any church's refusal to communicate baptized Christians who are not members of that particular congregation. And Commentary (28) modestly calls for further study to determine if bread and wine are a feature of the Lord's Supper "unchangeably instituted by Jesus" or whether different local food and drink in certain parts of the world would be more suitable. (My own missionary service in West Africa inclines me to think that the latter alternative would indeed be more suitable.)

The last section of the Lima Document, *Ministry*, moves from consideration of the calling of the whole People of God to minister to his world in the body of Christ to the ordination of selected members of the Church for specialized ministries within the whole work and mission of Christ, into which we entered in the beginning with baptism and through which we are sustained and encouraged by our eucharists together. This chronology and rationale is exactly in focus, and is extremely helpful in providing an overview of the whole Christian journey, for all too often we stumble along our own individual paths, confused by the demands of the moment and the problems of the particular space we happen to occupy.

Section I is a splendidly lucid statement of where we are as Christian churches in relationship to our broken world where God calls the

whole of humanity to become his people: we Christians share that brokenness with our "differences concerning the place and forms of the ordained ministry" (I,6), but our very knowledge of our failures and imperfection shows that we recognize a problem, and that, at least, offers hope for its solution. Particularly valuable is the statement in I:4, "The Church is called [by God] to proclaim and prefigure the Kingdom of God." Ordained clergy are strong on proclamation – great is the company of the preachers. An equally important word in that statement, however, is not to proclaim but to *prefigure* the Kingdom. We have already begun that prefiguration in baptism, we extend that preview in eucharist, and we construct prototypes of the Kingdom by the way we enable the whole people of God to achieve our common ministry of praise to God and service to his world. The balance here is just right. Our several styles of ordained ministry are all right as far as they go, and they have developed for good historical reasons.¹² But they are surely penultimate and not the primary consideration in the proclamation and prefiguration of the Kingdom. What requires our primary efforts now in our ministry is work together "from the perspective of the calling of the whole people of God"(I,6).

Again in Section II, the Church and the Ordained Ministry, the term *prefigure* is used of the apostles, who "prefigure both the Church as a whole and the persons within it who are entrusted with . . . specific authority and responsibility."¹³ That responsibility is earlier on defined as "pointing to [the Church's] fundamental dependence on Jesus," thereby providing "within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity" (Par. 8). Ordained ministers then have as their primary reason for existence the job of pointing to Christ and effecting unity among fellow Christians and reconciliation among the warring factions of our broken world.

It is curious, however, that the text does not explicitly refer to baptism as our first step to Christ and reconciliation with God and his creation, although it goes on, rightly, to refer to the celebration of the eucharist where "Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the Church" (Par. 14). The document wisely extends the emphasis on unity to the relationship between ordained ministers and their congregations: although called to be leaders, "they are bound to the faithful in interdependence and reciprocity" (Par. 16). A vivid example of this unity between ordained ministers and the faithful, which protects the Church from the distortions of isolation and domination, is the term *priesthood* or *priest*, which Commentary (17) rightly shows is never applied to an ordained minister in the New Testament but is reserved "on the one hand, for the unique priesthood of Jesus Christ and, on the other hand, for the royal and prophetic priesthood of all baptized." So the ordained ministers, called priests in some churches, are "related to

the priestly reality of Jesus Christ and the whole community" and derive that title from Jesus Christ, "the unique priest of the new covenant."¹⁴

Turning to the thorny question of Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons in III, *The Forms of the Ordained Ministry*, the Lima Document is a model of ecumenical diplomacy, pastoral sensitivity, and historical honesty. It challenges all of us, with whatever pattern of ministry we happen to have, not to regard it as a "blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry"¹⁵ but to learn from the history of the Church that we have enjoyed a variety of forms of ministry and that we need to learn from each other. For example, I as an Episcopal priest need to think and pray about the meaning of *our* royal and prophetic priesthood in Christ and in what sense my life and ministry is authentically that of a presbyter in the Body of Christ. And I think that the Anglican communion to which I belong needs to reflect upon the function of deacons in our traditional threefold pattern of ministry. For many of us Anglican clergy the diaconate was merely a six-month inferior, lame duck ministry until we became real ministers, that is, priests.¹⁶ Surely we have much to learn from Christian neighbors and friends in other communions whose life of *diakonia* puts us to shame.¹⁷ And finally our Episcopalian bishops, I think, also have a certain identity crisis at least in the minds of some members of the Anglican communion, for they are elected by popular vote in our American dioceses and often serve primarily as administrative leaders and liturgico-ceremonial figures, yet are part of a worldwide centuries-old Anglican tradition of bishops appointed by the British Crown, often as a result of theological learning and social prominence. The Lima Document is helpful in focusing upon the necessity for a ministry of *episkope* "to express and safeguard the unity of the body. Every church needs this ministry of unity in some form in order to be the Church of God, the one body of Christ, a sign of the unity of all in the Kingdom" (Par. 23).

The text goes on to discuss IV *Succession in the Apostolic Tradition*, important for the whole Church, and the fact that the bishops of some churches stand in a historic succession of the apostolic ministry. We in the Anglican communion rejoice that our tradition includes the historic episcopate; I would want to share that heritage with other Christian groups as we move towards unity, while at the same time utterly rejecting "any suggestion that the ministry exercised in their own tradition should be invalid until the moment that it enters into an existing line of episcopal succession" (Par. 38).

Having stressed the value I find in the historical continuity expressed in the succession of the apostolic ministry we have retained in Anglicanism, I do feel uncomfortable with the relapse to sign language in Section 38: the episcopal succession can be appreciated "as a

sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church." In view of the careful use of *sign* in the section devoted to the eucharist, I think *sign* here should be replaced by a less ambiguous term, shall we say, "episcopal succession can be appreciated as a historical fact, giving evidence for, though not guaranteeing, the continuity and unity of the church."

Again I am uncomfortable with the section V, *Ordination* which also gives short shrift to *history*. I was astonished in my first reading of this text to find in C,47 no mention of history, church history, history of interpretation of scripture, or history of doctrine in the proposed curriculum for candidates for the ordained ministry. And sign language pops up again half a dozen times in this section (and twice in section VI!). Could neglect of history and overuse of the ambiguous term *sign* be interconnected?

But my last word for Sections V *Ordination* and VI *Towards the Mutual Recognition of the Ordained Ministries* must be one of praise and delight. Just as ministry is the work of the whole people of God, so ordination has a universal quality which "seeks to continue the mission of the apostles and to remain faithful to their teaching" (Par. 39). It is "an act of the whole community" (Par. 41) and therefore "churches in ecumenical conversations can recognize their respective ordained ministries if they are mutually assured of their intention to transmit the ministry of Word and sacrament in continuity with apostolic times" (Par. 52).

Intention is the key word in these efforts to understand our own ordination and that of our friends and companions in other Christian communions. The Lima Document is a splendid explanation of our intentions, but not in the sense that the road to hell is paved with sterile good intentions which never produce results. For here our intentions are candidly shared, so we can honestly come to know each other and get moving together in concrete steps towards fuller unity in our worship of God and service to his world. As an American Episcopalian I am greatly encouraged by the candor and sensitivity of this document. For all the infelicities and ambiguities it has (and I think they are surprisingly few for a committee document, trying to be as inclusive as possible), the Lima Document is a wise and generous statement of where we are as "a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour . . ." ¹⁸ and how near we have come in our commitment "to close collaboration in Christian witness and service . . . striving together to realize the goal of visible Church unity." ¹⁹

FOOTNOTES

¹The *Lima Document*, ix.

²For example, John Macquarrie, *The Principles of Christian Theology* Second Edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 403ff: "probably ecumenism has become the most important movement in the Church's development in the twentieth century."

³For example, Austin Farrer, *The Crown of the Year* (Westminster: Dacre, 1952), 61: "The Church celebrates the sacrifice of Christ with joy and not with sorrow It is the overflowing of the bridegroom's pleasure that enlivens the guests, and the Church rejoices in the overflowing of the joy of God."

⁴*The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church, 1976 (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), p. 298.

⁵Krister Stendahl warns about theological slogans in his delightful essay "Kerygma and Kerygmatic," now reprinted as chapter 3 of *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

⁶For example, Ian T. Ramsey, *Religious Language: An Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases* (London: SCM Press, 1957), ch.2. Cf. John Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, 135, no. 10, who rejects Tillich's use of *sign* as arbitrary pointer in contrast to *symbol*, which participates in what is symbolized. On the other hand, George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954) offers 183 pages of signs and symbols, symbols having "acquired a deeper meaning than the sign . . .," p.8. And Amos Wilder in his essay "Scenarios of Life and Destiny," now reprinted as chapter 2 of *Jesus' Parables and the War of Myths*, edited, with a preface by James Breech (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) shows how a "true metaphor or symbol is more than a sign," p.83.

⁷See II,C, 15, p.13, for a further stage in the right direction, "sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood."

⁸I,1,p.10.

⁹II,D,19 and 20, p.14.

¹⁰*The Book of Common Prayer*, 372.

¹¹Cf. E,24.

¹²Commentary (11), p.22, stresses the "complex historical developments" which have led to our different forms of ordination. Note the excellent discussion of the history of ordination in Commentary (40), p. 31.

¹³II,A,10, p. 21.

¹⁴Commentary (17) and II,C,17, p. 23.

¹⁵III,A,19, p. 24

¹⁶"When I was ordained Deacon, the Bishop of Los Angeles, following the 1928 Prayerbook, prayed for my colleagues and me: "Make them, we beseech thee, O Lord, to be modest, humble, and constant in their Ministration . . . that they . . . may so well behave themselves in this inferior Office, that they may be found worthy to be called unto the higher Ministries in thy Church," p. 535.

¹⁷See Commentary (31), which raises a whole series of excellent questions about the rationale and functions of deacons.

¹⁸From the Constitution of the World Council of Churches, cited in the Lima Document, vii.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

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